

FMATS POLICY COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
December 20, 2006

I. Call to Order

Howard Thies, Acting DOT&PF Regional Director, called the meeting to order at the City Hall Conference Room at 10:00 a.m.

II. Introduction of Members and Attendees

The following members were present:

Don Seeliger
Jennifer Yuhas for Mayor Jim Whitaker
Dave Jacoby for Mayor Steve Thompson
Tom Chapple
Luke Hopkins
Howard Thies, Chair

FMATS Staff Present:

Judy Chapman
Emily Bratcher
Todd Boyce

Attendees:

Dave Bloom
Jerry Rafson
Colleen Ackiss
Al Beck
Shawn Staker
Shannon McCarthy
Jim Remitz
Joan Hardesty
Mike Schmetzer
Bob Tilly
Todd Boyce
Bernando Hernandez
Glenn Miller
Senator Gary Wilken (arrived late)
Representative David Guttenberg (arrived late)
Mara Bacsujlaky

III. Public Comments

No public comments. Howard Thies asked for any changes to the agenda, and proposed several himself, beginning with a discussion of the Intermodal Freight Distribution Pilot Grant Program. He proposed this go first on the agenda. He also proposed adding a discussion of the Holmes Road closeout issue (Dave Bloom will present on this item). Additionally, Jerry Rafson will discuss funding issues associated with projected STIP funding. Luke Hopkins asked to add a Context Sensitive Design discussion and the election of the Policy Committee Chair.

IV. Approval of the November 21, 2006 Agenda

The December 20, 2006 agenda was presented.

Motion to approve the December 20, 2006 agenda as presented (Jacoby/Chapple). No opposition. Approved.

V. Approval of November 21, 2006 Policy Committee minutes

The November 21, 2006 minutes were presented.

Motion to approve the November 21, 2006 minutes as presented (Chapple/Jacoby). No opposition. Approved.

VI. ARRC/DOT&PF Freight Intermodal Pilot Grant Distribution Program proposed solution (new agenda item)

DOT&PF Planning Chief Jerry Rafson discussed the changes made per FMATS to work with the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) to come up with an acceptable proposal for the Intermodal grant program. The agreement is outlined in the handout. It provides for an interim Phillips Field Road project that would include resurfacing and widening the shoulders to the extent practical within the existing right of way, remove and replace guardrail, and remove vegetation to improve visibility. The budget for this interim project is \$1.965 million.

Tom Brooks of ARRC described the ARRC's proposal to implement safety improvements to the Railyard, and mentioned the need for additional lighting, an item deleted from the project due to funding limits. He mentioned two main problems at the intermodal yard: commercial truckers mixing with the ARRC operation removing trailers from the train, and lighting.

Jerry Rafson indicated he would like to see approval from the FMATS committee so the proposal can be sent to FHWA for approval and begin work on these

projects. The ARRC indicated that construction on their portion of the project could feasibly start next summer.

Luke Hopkins asked if there was a plan to widen the existing right of way for the Phillips Field road project. Jerry indicated that this would be an interim project which would not acquire new right-of-way. The reconstruction project has been moved out towards the tail end of the TIP (likely ten or more years out). The project costs have risen to over \$10,000,000 excluding right of way and DOT&PF intends to continue on with the design of that project. We are also working on addressing the pedestrian issues.

Luke Hopkins mentioned the danger to pedestrians traveling along Phillips Field Road and asked if any pedestrian facilities would be added. Jerry indicated that none would be added in this project. Luke also asked if there were any safety issues resulting from increased use of the Johansen Expressway by trailer traffic, and if any intersection improvements or traffic safety improvements will be needed at that intersection. Jerry confirmed that none would be needed; the needs were addressed in the Traffic Impact Analysis conducted when access to the Railroad Depot via Danby St. was proposed. Dave Jacoby asked whether ICAP applies to the grant; Howard and Judy confirmed that it does. Luke asked about the right of way cost issue. Dave Bloom, DOT&PF Preconstruction Engineer, said the railroad has significantly lowered the cost of the right of way to DOT. However, Bloom also indicated there were unresolved costs involving hazardous waste and right-of-way for privately owned lands. Dave said drawings would be available to FMATS after ARRC, DOT&PF and Festival Fairbanks meet in the next few weeks (ARRC's Bruce Carr is setting up this meeting). Jerry said the interim project will not add to the costs of the long-term project.

Luke Hopkins said he would like the Technical Committee to have the opportunity to review the proposed resolution and make a recommendation to the January 17, 2006 Policy Committee meeting. There was discussion of the need to repave and whether the existing pavement on Phillips Field Road would last another 10 years until the "ultimate project" is completed. There was some discussion of whether the funding estimated for the "ultimate project" could be bankrolled for it, instead of doing an interim project. Judy indicated the earmark funding is distributed over five years and she was not aware that it expires. One other funding issue is the planned rescission in SAFETEA-LU of 33% in FY09. We are hoping that issue will be resolved in the interim and are not sure how that will affect the final year disbursement.

Jennifer Yuhas indicated the right of way cost is a big issue and she would like to see more written information on right-of-way cost discussions. She suggested the Technical Committee review the proposal and right-of-way discussions and make a recommendation. She would like to see a reference to the right of way cost expectations.

Luke Hopkins made a motion to send the issue to the Technical Committee for a recommendation to the Policy Committee at its January 17 meeting. (Hopkins/Seeliger). No opposition. Motion passed.

VII. FMATS Organizational Study Update

The Draft Organizational Study was presented to the Policy Committee. Belynda Johnson would like comments from the PC in the next couple of weeks. Judy asked committee members to review it and send her their comments, which she would forward on to the consultant.

Jacoby asked that Belynda Johnson be contacted for a work session to answer questions on the report recommendations. Judy indicated there would be a cost of at least \$2,000 as Ms. Johnson has already used up her travel budget. The committee members indicated this was acceptable. Judy will check with the consultant and send out an e-mail when the session is scheduled.

VIII. Airport Way Improvements Study

Kittleson & Associates presented the Airport Way Reconnaissance Study. This study spans Airport Way from the Mitchell/Parks Highway to the Richardson Highway.

An overview is discussed. Questions were raised about the project costs, which range from \$221,000,000 to \$232,000,000. The Kittleson Project Manager and DOT&PF Traffic Engineer Colleen Ackiss confirmed that approximately \$110,000,000 of these costs are estimated to be in right of way. There may be some ability to negotiate with individual business owners on right-of-way on a sub-project basis. It is likely that the findings of the study will be broken out into manageable project segments. Colleen Ackiss indicated that doing so shouldn't be an issue for the FHWA-approved environmental documents. There was some discussion about having private businesses help finance portions of the recommendations as they expand their businesses.

IX. Other Issues

Holmes Road: Dave Bloom presented the information regarding Holmes Road project, which is an old project that should be closed out. The first few phases of the project have been constructed and the drainage issues addressed. Closing out the FHWA project will not affect the project's place in the TIP.

Motion: to accept the proposal to take the Holmes Road project off the TIP is approved. (Chapple/Jacoby). No objections. Approved.

Context Sensitive Design: Luke Hopkins mentioned Context Sensitive Design, a topic the Technical Committee recently heard a presentation about. He would like to see it on the Policy Committee agenda for next month. He mentioned the resolution that AMATS passed on Context Sensitive Design, and suggested FMATS do something similar. Staff mentioned that the presentation on Context Sensitive Design and the AMATS resolution were included in members' packets for review.

STIP Funding Issues: Jerry talked about the STIP and the appropriations from Congress, which are likely to occur within a "Continuing Resolution" which effectively fixes the funding at last year's levels. Therefore, anticipated increases for FFY07 may not occur, requiring a rebalancing of the FMATS TIP. There will be a statewide impact.

Chair of the Policy Committee: Jennifer Yuhas proposed that Luke Hopkins be asked to be the chair of the Policy Committee. Don Seeliger suggested the election of the chair be done at the next meeting, following an examination of the FMATS Organizational Study and the method for changing FMATS Bylaws. Judy will email information on how Bylaws can be changed.

X. Public Comment

No public comment.

Adjourn – 11:38 a.m.

Next Scheduled Policy Committee Meeting is January 17, 2007 at 10:00 am.

Approved: _____

Howard Thies
Chair, FMATS Policy Committee

Date: _____